

## ABSTRACT

### EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

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### THE EFFECTS OF RETENTION AND SOCIAL PROMOTION ON SCHOOL ACHIEVEMENT

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This study examines the effects of retention and social promotion on school achievement over a twelve-year period (Fall 1986 - Summer 1998). This process will determine whether students who are retained have a higher level of achievement while those who are socially promoted fall further behind. Grade Level Assessment Test (GLAT) scores were obtained for 1989 and 1992 and compared to determine the level of student achievement at the primary school level. Bahamas Junior Certificate (BJC) and Bahamas General Certificate of Secondary Education (BGCSE) scores were obtained and compared to determine the level of student achievement at the high school level. Student records and enrollment files were obtained to track them over a twelve year (12) period to get an indication of the retention rate, drop-out rate, and promotion rate per year. A researcher-constructed interview was administered to twenty percent (20%) of the elementary school principals, ten percent (10%) of the secondary school administrators and the Primary Mathematics Officer of the Learning Resources Unit, to gather

information regarding their perception as it relates to the effects of retention and social promotion on school achievement.

The findings indicate that retention and social promotion can have profound negative effects on school achievement. It showed that there was a significant difference in the achievement of students normally promoted when compared with those socially promoted and retained. The students socially promoted and retained both scored substantially below the normally promoted students but still showed a difference in achievement; resulting in all three hypotheses being rejected.

Based on the results of the interviews conducted, principals and administrators believe that there can be a significant difference in achievement depending on the following factors: whether retention is properly decided and implemented, the level at which students are retained which can significantly determine its success, the resources available to assist these slow learners, and the support received from schools and homes.



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THE EFFECTS OF RETENTION AND SOCIAL PROMOTION  
ON SCHOOL ACHIEVEMENT

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Education in the Bahamas comes under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education. There are currently 210 schools in the Bahamas. The government fully maintains 161 (76.3%) of these schools while the remaining 49 (23.7%) are independent (Bahamas Handbook, 1996 p.298). In New Providence, thirty-seven (37) are government-owned and thirty-one (31) are independent. In the Family Islands, one hundred and twenty-four (124) are government-owned and eighteen (18) are independent.

Elementary education in The Commonwealth of the Bahamas is covered over a six year period (Grades 1 through 6). The goal of The Ministry of Education according to its “Role and Purpose” handout (1990) is to ensure that all primary school students develop those basic process skills to enable them to function as well-rounded individuals. Emphasis must be placed on literacy, numeracy and social skills so that a firm foundation is built for future development. Free education is available in all Ministry schools throughout the Bahamas.

Currently, eighty-five percent (85%) of Bahamians are literate and fifteen percent (15%) cannot read or write according to the Let’s Read Bahamas Secretariat. Literacy is based on the number of students completing sixth grade. While ninety-five percent (95%) of Bahamians complete sixth grade, they are not all functionally literate (Bahamas Handbook, 1998 p.311). Many are the children, however, who passed through and out of the school system and are far from being educated. Some are barely literate and with a low level of comprehension. It gave rise to a concern several years ago that a majority of

the youngsters seeking employment could not adequately fill out a job application.<sup>2</sup>

The concern was such that a minister of education discontinued the practice of social promotion in the government schools, as well as the graduation exercises with attendant proms and other associated activities. A high school diploma had to be deserved (The Nassau Guardian, 1995 p.1). Needless to say, this effort was not successful because students continue to be promoted based on age, and not ability so as to satisfy the working definition of social promotion.

Retention rates in the Bahamas surfaced in 1988 and have been on the increase ever since. There are many arguments for and against retaining students in the Bahamas. Nobody can dispute the fact that promoting school children who can not read or write simply to avoid hurting their feelings or to make space for incoming student perpetuates failure but substantial evidence suggests that it is also a mistake to routinely hold those children back just to satisfy policy. This decision will effect these failing students tremendously in the future.

Retention does not work for all children especially those whose problems go deeper than academic immaturity. It will not raise the IQ of a slow learner or remedy the behavioral problems of the emotionally disturbed. Retention, however, can serve children who have fallen so far behind that applying intervention measures alone will not solve the problem.

### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to investigate the effects of retention and social promotion on school achievement as measured by student records and enrollment files and an analysis of student performance based on standardized test scores. By examining years of schooling and attainment over a twelve year period (1986 - 1998), the study will determine whether students who are retained have a higher level of achievement while those who are socially promoted fall further behind.

### Background of the Problem

In the Commonwealth of the Bahamas the compulsory school attendance age limit by law for elementary-aged students is 5-10 years. By this method, a five-year-old child entering Primary School for the first time enters grade 1, and the following year at six years of age will be placed in grade 2. (See Table 1.1).

At 10 years plus, following the Normal Promotional Cohort flow (N. P. C. F.), the child should have completed grade six of the primary school if no grades were repeated. At the secondary level the child enters grade seven at approximately eleven years of age, and without repetition of any of the grades should reach grade twelve at sixteen years of age and hence, graduate from high school. (See Table 1.2). However, as stated previously, students learn at different rates, and given the opportunity they can reach or come close to their full potential. Without repetition, a cohort of students should all complete the Normal Promotional Cohort Flow Cycle together (Stubbs, 1992 p.5).

Table 1.1  
Students Grade/Age Analysis Cohort  
In Ministry Primary Schools

AGE (In Years)	1	2	Grade 3	4	5	6
5	→					
6	→	→				
7	→	→	→			
8	→	→	→	→		
9	→	→	→	→	→	
10+	→	→	→	→	→	→

Table 1.1: Normal Promotional Cohort Flow (N.P.C.F.)

Table 1.2  
Students Grade/Age Analysis Cohort  
In Ministry Secondary Schools

AGE (In Years)	7	8	Grade 9	10	11	12
11	→					
12	→	→				
13	→	→	→			
14	→	→	→	→		
15	→	→	→	→	→	
16+	→	→	→	→	→	→

Table 1.2: Normal Promotional Cohort Flow (N.P.C.F.)

Due to late enrollment, absenteeism, emotional and behavioral problems, child neglect, lack of parental support, and other issues, many students find themselves repeating a particular grade the following school year only to see their peers advance to the next grade level, make new friends and have new experiences. This reality is difficult for little minds to conceive especially when their problems are so deeply rooted and a result of no fault of their own. Studies have just begun to surface concerning issues of retention of students and social promotion in the Bahamas. This study will determine whether students who are retained have a higher level of achievement, while those who are socially promoted fall further behind.

Many children come from homes that are headed by a single parent (usually the mother) where the father has abandoned the family or is unaware of the existence of these children. Nevertheless, the responsibility of raising these children is now that of a mother who is barely able to financially or emotionally take care of them. So many children are poorly fed and attend school hungry while others may not attend regularly because they are unable to concentrate on learning with empty stomachs. Those who do attend find other ways to distract them from the pain of hunger by usually initiating mischief.

Others leave home in route for school but never reach or come ill prepared to work. They wear improper uniforms, shoes, white tennis shoes or expensive black tennis shoes with different colors like red and white. This is unacceptable attire in the Bahamas where there is a strict dress code for all schools, and students are expected to abide by this code at all times. All students are to wear plain black shoes with school uniforms.

Tennis shoes are to be worn only during Physical Education time. The Ministry

of Education enforces proper school uniform code in conjunction with the individual school principals. Students who attend school wearing improper uniform will be sent home to change into proper uniform or disciplined.

Linda Moultrie-Missick (1999), Senior Mistress and 20 year teacher at Centerville Primary School, has a strong passion for education and children, and believes that these problems should not be reasons for children not to attend school. If for some reason parents are unable to provide lunch or uniforms for their children, schools have lunch programs and uniforms are available to distribute to those students in need. It is up to the parents, however, to inform the schools of their needs so that a collaborative effort can be made to ensure that education is one hundred percent (100%) beneficial for all children.

To add, there are those students who come to school without a pen that writes, no pencil, books with no clean sheets or three/five subject notebooks. The whole idea is to make life at school so complex for the teacher that they will not be missed when they make their escape (The Nassau Guardian, 1994 p.9A).

There are some school children that come from homes where there is a family feud or feud with the neighbors and much abusive language used. Many children learn early how to imitate the language they hear (usually on a daily basis). The gross lack of respect that many children portray as a result of this unstable upbringing/rearing is very frightening. Due to the lack of love and attention from the adult in the home, many children vent out their frustrations in the treatment of others, especially adults, and their property. This leads to fights in schools, confrontations with teachers, vandalism, weapon possession, and physical and verbal aggression against peers, teachers and others

in authority.

As stated by Mrs. Clover Pratt (1999), a 15-year administrator and first year vice-principal at Centerville Primary School, some of these children are products of alcoholism, and drugs. Hence they are prone to psychosomatic disorders. Others are from homes where one or both parents are illiterate and socio-economic conditions are extremely poor. Finally, there are those who are caught between separation and/or divorce of parents.

A child has the right to be protected not only from the patent abuses of his parents but also from the ignorance of his parents. There are no delinquent children only delinquent parents. Public education may be used as a mechanism to free the child from the shackles of unfit parents.

### Statement of the Problem

According to the information obtained from The Ministry of Education Planning Unit Report (Stubbs, 1997 p.2), the decision to hold a student back will profoundly impact performances because the child will graduate from secondary school one year later than initially anticipated. As a result the child completes school (if not dropping out) at 17, 18, or even 19 years of age if repetition occurs more than once, instead of the present legal standard age of 16 years. The problem to be addressed by this study is to determine the effects of retention and social promotion on school achievement.

Students who are products of retention do find themselves subject to a lot of ridicule and peer pressure. This is a period in their lives when they may lack faith in their

abilities and self. Many of them are below average due to factors not of their own doing. Many find themselves repeating grades because they are late school entrants, they have too many family responsibilities, they lack family love, and they come from broken /distraught homes, they are neglected as children and they have a bad attitude about learning or in general (Stubbs, 1997 p.5).

To add, Mrs. Barbara Albury (1999), five year principal at Claridge Primary School, states that parents' attitude towards retention hinders children from repeating. Many of them believe that their children are bright regardless of their poor performance, and are outraged when their children have to repeat. She suggests that parents need to be more supportive of the schools and the educational decisions made for their children rather than accusing the schools of being negligent.

After nearly two decades, one of the most debated and seemingly unsolvable issues in education today is whether keeping children back or moving them along on the basis of social promotion is better for the failing child. Educators are faced with a formidable task of seeking an answer to this crucial question, which ultimately effects the future of many students.

### Significance of the Study

Retention can have a positive and negative effect on students depending on the level at which retention is initiated. In order for this issue to be successfully addressed, The Ministry of Education needs to ensure that ALL teachers are properly trained to teach ALL students and not just the average and above average students. Being properly



trained and prepared for all classroom challenges will help to alleviate the frustration that teachers feel due to the increasing number of below average students they encounter yearly. It is alarming to see how many students complete primary schooling without mastering the basic reading and mathematics skills.

In investigating the effects of retention and social promotion on school achievement, as measured by student records and enrollment files and an analysis of students performance based on standardized test scores, this study will determine whether students who are retained have a higher level of achievement while those who are socially promoted fall further behind. This study will compare years of schooling over a twelve-year period: 1986-1998. It will examine the views of 20 %(twenty percent) of the primary school principals, and a veteran primary Mathematics Officer's perception regarding this issue. This study should be beneficial in providing information that will investigate the effects of retention and social promotion on school achievement.

With the number of below average students increasing at an escalating rate every year, education officials are faced with making decisions that will create a system to prevent retention candidates from falling too far behind the educational tract, thus drifting away from education altogether and resorting to dropping out or criminal activities. In 1998 alone, some 167 students dropped out of school (40 of them being at the primary level), with hopes of joining the labor force along with the 4112 students who graduated in June, 1998. Dropouts at the primary level can be attributed mainly to emigration practices (Stubbs, 1997 p.1). Fortunately, only 2% of the one hundred and eighty-two sample students dropped out of school and this occurred at the secondary level.

According to Mr. Alonzo Strachan (1999), Attendance Officer at the Ministry of Education, in an interview with ZNS news, 50 students per school or 500 students per year, drop out of school. These are alarming numbers, as they are increasing rapidly every year. Many of these students drop out due to teenage pregnancy (in girls) and crime related activities (in boys). In an interview with Mrs. Joanna Redhead (1999), twenty-two year Primary Mathematics Officer, Learning Resources Unit (L. R. U.), confirms that when she asked elementary school girls about their career goals, many of the Bahamian girls stated that they want to have a baby by the time they are eleven, twelve, or thirteen years of age. With this type of response coming from our nation's future leaders, parents (especially Bahamian parents) need to play an extremely important role in their children's education to ensure that these outrageous "career goals" are minimized, if not completely erased.

By investigating the effects of retention and social promotion on school achievement, Ministry officials, principals and teachers alike, will have information that will show that there is a need to concern themselves more with the below average children because they are crying out for help and all it may take is a little genuine care and concern from us or we will forever have increasing numbers of delinquent children from our younger generation; sometimes referred to as generation X or the lost generation.

### Research Questions

1. What are the effects of retention on student achievement when compared against normal promotion?
2. What are the effects of social promotion on student achievement when compared against normal promotion?

### Chapter Summary

The decision to retain or socially promote individual students is one that should be made only after careful consideration has been taken, and many of the elementary principals interviewed have strongly supported this view. Schools and parents must monitor student progress closely and intercede at the first lapse. That means after-school tutoring, reading and learning centers, home assistance programs, Saturday school and summer schools.

As stated by Mrs. Mildred Turner, 13 year principal at Uriah McPhee Primary School (1999), teachers have to be willing to work so that students can learn. They need to be willing to provide tutoring to those slow learners, encourage first, second, and third graders to utilize the language enrichment and learning centers, as well as the two computer labs located on the school's premises. Once teachers are motivated, they will make the learning environment more conducive to student learning. Thus, learning becomes fun and not a chore.

This study will determine whether students who are retained have a higher level of achievement while those who are socially promoted fall further behind.

## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Aspects of the review of the literature that follow include a background from previous research, non-instructional influences on students, and attitudes and perceptions regarding the effects of retention and social promotion on school achievement.

#### Background from Previous Research

Retaining students within the public educational system in the Bahamas is becoming a big issue. There have been two basic questions raised on this issue. Firstly, is there any guarantee that the child will learn if he repeats the same grade? Secondly, if he is socially promoted and continues to fail, are his self-esteem and confidence any higher? (The Nassau Guardian, 1981 p.1).

The actual effects of retention on school achievement have not been clearly examined in the Bahamas. However, repeating a grade for any reason can be difficult for the entire family. In the Bahamian Educational System there is no policy in place that stipulates under what circumstances a child is to be held back a grade. Usually the decision to retain a child is that of the parent but Ministry officials (i.e. teachers) have also began holding back those below average students.

Advocates for retention are mainly “subject” oriented. They believe that given the opportunity all students can learn and master the material. However, due to the hierarchical manner in which subject matter is organized (i.e. increasing the level of difficulty), students who have not mastered the lower levels have a very difficult time

mastering subjects on a higher level. Nevertheless, those advocating retention believe it is a remedy for slow learners or students lacking maturity to achieve at the normal rate (The Nassau Guardian, 1981 p.1).

Additionally the view has been expressed that non-academic considerations such as conduct and sexual norms often tend to influence decisions to retain students. This point can be substantiated in that over eighty percent of the students being referred to the Ministry of Education's Psychological Services Unit are male (The Nassau Guardian, 1997 p.12). They are usually the students who have behavioral or emotional problems and are known for disrupting the flow of the school day. All of the elementary school principals interviewed agree that often these are the students who have repeated a grade at least once. If they are identified as being second or third time repeaters, psychological and behavioral tests will be conducted to determine if there is some other problem present. Testing can also be done on first time repeaters if there is concern.

Some of these youngsters are also cited for persistently slipping classes and/or school altogether (The Nassau Guardian, 1997 p.12). Unfortunately, many of these young men who are deemed dysfunctional in the school system today will be profiled in the criminal news of tomorrow.

Other arguments presented claim that retention improved grades (Ames 1981) and that retention in at least one instance helped children whose rate of progress was less than half the normal rate of progress in the previous year (The Nassau Guardian, 1981 p.3). The conclusion was that students responded positively to retention when they thought it was merited and negatively if they felt it was undeserved.

To confirm these findings, Mr. Earl Smith, (1999) first year principal at Yellow Elder Primary School recalls a case where a group of second grade students who were very below average, and candidates for retention were pulled by the school's literacy coordinator on a daily basis to work on improving their basic skills. Results were not immediate he recalls, but by the second book test, the students had improved tremendously and were no longer considered candidates for retention.

To add, Mr. Smith stresses the need for teachers to be willing to do whatever they can to help students learn. Hence, by incorporating intervention measures at the early stage of the problem, this enthusiastic principal was able to pull up a group of failing second graders, and prevent them from repeating. Mr. Smith is not against retention, in fact he agrees that it does work and has worked. It is a good way of helping students grasp basic concepts of that particular grade level. One possible negative result, he notes, is behavioral problems. He is strongly against social promotion if it is not earned.

#### Non-instructional Influences on Students

John Holt (1964) believed that we destroy children's capacity for intellectual growth by making them afraid- "afraid of not pleasing, of failing, of being wrong" (The Nassau Guardian, 1981 p.4). John Dewey (1939) attributed it to "imposition of adult standards, subject matter and methods upon those who are only growing toward maturity." According to Virginia Lazzara (1986), psychologist in private practice and former school psychologist:

A young child's biggest fear is not being separated from his friends or even disappointment in himself. He is afraid he's in trouble with his parents, that his parents are disappointed or angry. If the child can be assured that those things are not happening, it will be easier. Never underestimate the importance of parental acceptance. This is not the time for "I told you so" (The Nassau Guardian, 1986 p.6).

If parents want better students then they need to be more studious. They need to model the behavior they wish their children to portray. According to Albert Bandura, Ph.D., a psychologist and one of the leading theorists in the field of learning and behavior, children are observers and the same way they imitate mom and dad by dressing up, they will emulate those who influence their lives by reading and being studious (Nassau Guardian, 1990 p.8). It is the responsibility of parents and guardians to encourage this positive behavior from an early age and follow up and reinforce what teachers have taught.

According to a report written by the late Doris Hall in 1994 to test the reading abilities of Bahamian students in grades two, six and eight, a large number of our elementary school students are reading below average. These test results were recorded by The National Slossons' Reading Test (SORT) administered May - June of the above-mentioned year. The test reported that 46.2 percent of the second graders were reading below average, 35% of sixth graders and 55% of eighth graders. (See Appendix 2).

Also revealed by this test were the reading levels of males compared to females in government schools. According to the results, 51.5 percent of the males in second grade were reading below average, while only 40.6 percent of the females were reading below average. At the sixth grade level, 35.0 percent of the students were reading below

average. In comparison to females, males were far more below average than females: percent versus 42.4 percent. Performance of eighth graders shows a noticeable decline when compared to second and sixth graders. The majority of the students (55%) were performing below average. In comparison to females 61.1% of the males were performing below average whereas 49.3% of the eighth grade females were below average. (See Appendix 2). Included in this study of eighth graders are 182 (or equivalent number of) students being tracked for this study.

The SORT is based on the student's ability to pronounce words at different levels of difficulty. The words used in this test have been taken from standardized readers, and the reading levels obtained from this exercise represent median or standardized school achievement (late Doris Hall, 1994). All of the administrators interviewed agree that females do perform better than males even though, in most cases, males outnumber females in the schools.

Additionally, teachers and education officials must not overlook the differences among our students. They come to us from many different backgrounds be they cultural and/or material environments supplied by families of unequal status. Indeed a child coming from a highly verbal family with television, lots of books, and parents who help develop critically thinking minds is likely to be more motivated and successful than the child who does not have such a background (The Nassau Guardian, 1981 p.4). These factors must also be considered and addressed in order to provide a system of education offering equal opportunities to all students.



### Attitudes and Perceptions

The arguments presented by the research that is used for this study imply that students who are retained have a higher level of achievement only if they can see how retention will benefit them. However, there is no evidence to show that these students can not do equally very well if socially promoted. Despite the firm beliefs discussed, the literature available on retention is far from uniform. Some researchers disagree with the view that retention ensures greater attainment, instead they believe that it is harmful.

Nevertheless, many researchers including Reinberg and Griffin present the argument in their 1970 study that retention is the answer for normal but immature children especially in early grades (The Nassau Guardian, 1981 p.3). This finding was also confirmed by Mrs. Mildred Turner (1999), who believes that children retained in grades one through four will be affected very little or not at all by the decision. In fact, the majority of them improve and it helps straighten their weak skills. However, she adds that retention must be handled carefully at the fifth grade level because children have began developing their identity, and other social factors come into play. Students are only retained at the sixth grade level at the request of the parent or guardian.

Many researchers also advise school officials to make sure that the parents agree with the decision to retain the child. If for some reason parents are not in agreement with the school's decision to retain the child, Ms. Lazzara, former school psychologist recommends that parents have the child evaluated (The Nassau Guardian, 1981 p.6). This will prove very effective because parents know their children better than anyone so they must trust their judgment and ask to see the school psychologist or get the child

evaluated privately if in doubt. Ms. Lazzara had these words of encouragement to parents:

In my 10 years as a psychologist, I have seldom heard parents regret a decision to retain an elementary school-age child. Parents' experience a lot of anxiety over the decision but when it happens in grades K through 4, the parents look back on it as a wise move. It is easier on the child at the elementary level than later (The Nassau Guardian, 1986 p.6).

Very little research has been done on the effect of retention and social promotion on the individual student. Likewise studies done in the past give no indication as to why the retained students were not achieving. However based on the review of research on retention done by Jackson in 1975, most of the information available is inadequate for making valid inferences about the effect of grade retention on students (The Nassau Guardian, 1981 p.2). Hence, the purpose of this study is to investigate the effects of retention and social promotion on school achievement.

### Summary of the Literature Review

As all of the literature used for this study has indicated, there are varying ideas concerning the effects of retention and social promotion on student achievement. There are many studies showing positive and negative effects. Regardless of the outcome, the studies all indicate that there are varying factors to consider such as the cultural background of the student, social status, enrollment age, and maturity when a comparison between the two elements is examined.

## CHAPTER THREE

### THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The purpose of this study is to investigate the effects of retention and social promotion on school achievement as measured by students' records and enrollment files and an analysis of students' performance based on standardized test scores. School achievement will be considered as a dependent variable and is dependent upon normal pupil progression through the grades. Social promotion and retention may have adverse effects on student progress.

#### Presentation and Definition of the Variables

For analysis, the Grade Level Assessment Test (GLAT) scores of the sample population were obtained and studied to determine the overall percentile of achievement during their third and sixth grade period at Stephen Dillet Primary School. Bahamas Junior Certificate (BJC) and Bahamas General Certificate of Secondary Education (BGCSE) test scores were also obtained for ninth and twelfth grades. The primary areas of interest were level of student attainment and rate of student advancement at the end of the school year. GLAT test scores were obtained for 1989 and 1992 to compare the level of student achievement at the primary school level. BJC and BGCSE test scores for 1995 and 1998 were obtained to compare the level of student achievement for high school. Also, student records and files were obtained to track attainment over a twelve-year period (1986 - 1998). One hundred and eighty-two (182) first graders were selected to be

tracked. A researcher constructed interview was used to examine the view of twenty percent (20%) of the elementary school principals, ten percent (10%) of the secondary school administrators and a veteran Primary Mathematics Officer, as it relates to the effects of retention and social promotion on school achievement. The interview consisted of 15 items.

### Definition of Variables

#### Retention

Holding students back who have not mastered the skills required for a particular grade level.

#### Social Promotion

The working definition given by The Ministry of Education is moving students from one grade to another based on age and not ability. In fact, social promotion should be defined as the advancement of students to the next level who are not ready. Students who are socially promoted should not be classified in the same category as students who have earned promotion.

#### Normal Promotion

Promoting students from one grade to another based on ability and performance. These are the students who worked hard all year to master the skills of a particular grade level.

### Achievement

Based on the grades and test scores of students at a particular grade level.

### Definition of Terms

#### SLOSSAN'S Reading Test (SORT)

A measure used to conduct a reading survey in an attempt to determine the reading levels of a cross section of students.

#### Grade Level Assessment Test (GLAT)

Measures verbal and mathematical skills of students in grades 3, 6, and 8/9. It was introduced in 1985 in response to Educators' concerns about the performance of students throughout the Bahamas. Prior to GLAT, there was no way to measure how students were performing from school to school. GLAT was administered to high school students for the last time in 1993.

#### Bahamas Junior Certificate (BJC)

A 9<sup>th</sup> grade exam first administered in 1954. The structure of the exam mirrors the BGCSE Exam. The subjects offered are English Language, Mathematics, General Science, Religious Knowledge, Social Studies, Art, Technical, Drawing and Home Economics.

#### Bahamas General Certificate of Secondary Education (BGCSE)

First administered in 1993, as it is a secondary school leaving examination. It is also used for matriculation into colleges and the work place. Presently there are twenty-five (25) subjects offered at the BGCSE level.

### Relationship among the Variables

The independent variables are retention and social promotion. The dependent variables are student achievement and attainment. The prediction is that years of schooling are not the only factors; however, the amount of support given by parents, teachers, and the community at large impact school achievement and attainment.

### Null Hypothesis

1. There is no significant difference in the achievement of students who have been retained as compared with students who have been normally promoted.
2. There is no significant difference in the achievement of students who have been socially promoted as compared with students who have been normally promoted.
3. There is no significant difference in the achievement of students who have been retained as compared with students who have been socially promoted.

### Limitations of the Study

The data used are limited to Ministry Officials and School Administrators' accurate record keeping and proper filing of standardized test scores and enrollment data. The researcher-constructed interview was given to twenty percent of the elementary

school principals and a veteran Primary Mathematics Officer for elementary education, with one hundred percent (100%) participation and honesty.

Correlation of the test scores from the GLAT, BJC's and BGCSEs were examined to ensure that the expectations of scores did not exceed the level of student achievement.

The researcher assumes that the data gathered from a researcher constructed interview are truthful and a result of a direct interest in school achievement.

### Summary of the Theoretical Framework

The information for this study will be gathered from existing data obtained from Stephen Dillet Primary School, and C. C. Sweeting and C. R. Walker Secondary Schools, and from information obtained from interviews. Standardized test scores were also obtained from the Testing and Evaluation Unit of the Ministry of Education. It will be limited to the accuracy of record keeping, the numerous copies of research reports and data obtained from Dr. E. Stubbs, Ministry of Education Planning Unit, and the student records and enrollment files of one hundred and eighty-two (182) students obtained from the above schools.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### METHODS AND PROCEDURES

#### Research Design

This type of research is quantitative using descriptive analysis to investigate the effects of retention and social promotion on school achievement, as measured by student records, enrollment files and an analysis of students performance based on standardized test scores.

#### Description of the Setting

Permission was requested from the Testing and Evaluation Unit of the Ministry of Education to obtain test scores from the GLAT, BJC's and BGCSE standardized test.

Permission was also granted to gather information from twenty percent (20%) of the primary school principals and a veteran Primary Mathematics Officer, with over twenty years experience coordinating programs for elementary school students, to obtain a first hand, objective view of the effects of retention on school achievement and attainment. A fifteen- (15) question interview was constructed by the researcher and administered to the participants.

The elementary school used is Stephen Dillet Primary School in the Southwestern District of New Providence. The high school used is C. C. Sweeting/C. R. Walker High School, where most of the students are transferred for junior and senior high school education. Due to students not transferring to the assigned feeder schools, transfer records had to be obtained from all junior and secondary high schools in order to



accurately track all students used for the study (see Appendix 7).

Enrollment records show that the majority of the students are from lower class homes and live within walking distance to the schools. The schools have a one hundred percent (100%) black population with most of the students coming from Bahamian homes.

### Sampling Procedures

The veteran Primary Mathematics Officer was recommended by the Assistant Director of Education for Curriculum, Mrs. Verona Seymour, of the Ministry of Education. One or two elementary school principals were selected from each district. Centerville Primary and Uriah McPhee Primary Schools were chosen from the Northwestern District, Yellow Elder Primary and Adelaide Primary Schools were chosen from the Southwestern District, Stephen Dillet was chosen from the Northwestern District, and Claridge Primary was chosen from the Southeastern District. Administrators were also included from Donald Davis Secondary School, A. F. Adderley Secondary School, and Government High School (see Appendix 6). These schools have a diverse population of students and offer an excellent opportunity to investigate the effects of retention and social promotion on school achievement.

### Description of the Instrument(s)

One survey was created by the researcher to examine the degree to which retention and social promotion effects student achievement. It contained fifteen (15) questions structured to determine whether students who are retained have a higher level of achievement while those who are socially promoted fall further behind. (See Appendix 5).

A table of GLAT test scores collected for the third and sixth graders to be sampled (1989 & 1992) was compiled. This test is given to all third, sixth and eighth graders to test students' intellectual level. According to Mrs. Evelyn Sawyer of the Testing and Evaluation Unit of the Ministry of Education, these grade levels were chosen because they were seen as pivotal points in children's school life (See Appendix 3&4). GLAT was administered to high school students for the last time in 1993. BJC and BGCSE scores were also obtained and compared to measure high school achievement (See Appendix 3&4).

One hundred and eighty-two (182) first graders were tracked over a twelve-year period (1986-1998) to obtain their achievement. After the first sitting of GLAT in 1989, fifty-six (56) students were normally promoted, ninety-nine (99) were socially promoted, fourteen (14) repeated, and thirteen (13) were listed as status unknown because it was unclear whether they dropped out of school, transferred schools, or emigrated. Therefore, only one hundred and sixty-nine students' (169) were successfully tracked throughout high school. This information was obtained from student records and enrollment files.

## Data Collection Procedures

### Step 1

Student records and enrollment files were obtained to determine the retention, social promotion and normal promotion rates of the 182 sample students over a twelve-year period (1986 - 1998). This section also includes the Grade Level Assessment Test (GLAT) scores from third and sixth grades, which were obtained to determine the performance of the students at the primary school level. Bahamas Junior Certificate (BJC) and Bahamas General Certificate of Secondary Education (BGCSE) test scores were obtained to measure school achievement at the high school level. The sample was randomly selected from the schools' enrollment and/or attendance rosters.

### Step 2

Interviews were given to twenty percent (20%) of the elementary school principals, and ten percent (10%) of the high school administrators and a veteran Primary Mathematics Officer with one hundred percent (100%) response. The questions were skewed to determine whether students who are retained have a higher level of achievement while those who are socially promoted fall further behind.

### Step 3

Tables and graphs were created to visualize the differences in the retention and promotion rates.

### Data Analysis

This section will test the differences in achievement among groups of students. The three groups of students are those socially promoted, normally promoted, and those retained. The students socially promoted and retained will be compared against those of normal progression to determine whether there is a difference in academic performance.

The writer will carry out a test of statistical significance to determine whether the null hypothesis can be rejected or accepted. In order to decide this, the degree of dispersion or spread of the scores around the mean will have to be determined. The index of this spread being used is called the standard deviation.

Once the standard deviation has been determined, the standard error of the mean difference will be calculated based on the standard deviation of the students socially promoted and those retained. The mean difference is statistically significant and will determine whether the null hypothesis is rejected or accepted. The value of 'p' itself is often referred to as the level of statistical significance.

As the mean difference increases (all other things being equal), the value of 't' will increase and the value of 'p' will decrease. When the value of 'p' drops below the (.05) level, the mean difference is significant (and probably not due to chance).

### Summary of Methods and Procedures

In this quantitative study, the information was gathered from an interview survey and standardized test scores. Students' records and enrollment files were obtained from

Stephen Dillet Primary School and tracked throughout Junior and Secondary School. The data was assessed in relationship to the graphed information and the computerized results of the survey.

## CHAPTER 5

### ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

The information for this study was obtained from existing data at Stephen Dillet Primary school, and all appropriate feeder schools, and from information gathered from interviews and standardized test scores. Hence, the purpose of this study is to investigate the effects of retention and social promotion on school achievement.

The first null hypothesis suggests that there is no significant difference in the achievement of students who have been retained as compared with students who have been normally promoted.

The data on students' achievement at the primary school level based on third grade GLAT scores for students normally promoted and those students retained are presented in Table 1. These data showed that the mean GLAT score for students normally promoted was 58.83% and the standard deviation was 15.17. The mean for the students retained was 15.70% and the standard deviation was 14.64.

The difference between the means was 43.1 in favor of the normally promoted mean. The standard error of difference of the normally promoted students was 2.03 yielding a 't' ratio of 29.02 that was significant at the .05 level of significance. The standard error of difference of the retained students was 4.06 yielding a 't' ratio of 3.87 that was statistically significant at the .05 level of significance.

Table 1

Comparison between normally promoted students and those retained based on GLAT 89 & GLAT 90 scores at the primary school level

Item	No.	Mean	S. D.	S. E.	"t"
Third grade GLAT 1989 scores of Normally promoted students	56	58.83	15.17	2.03	29.02
Third grade GLAT 1990 scores of retained students	13	15.70	14.64	4.06	3.87

Significant  $p < 0.05$

S.D. = standard deviation; S.E. = standard error

The data on students' achievement at the primary school level based on sixth grade GLAT scores for students normally promoted and those retained are presented in Table 2.

These data showed that the mean GLAT score for students normally promoted was 70.80% and the standard deviation was 21.30. The mean for the students retained was 8.63 and the standard deviation was 10.63.

Table 2

Comparison between normally promoted students and those retained based on GLAT 92 & GLAT 93 scores at the primary school level

Item	No.	Mean	S. D.	S. E.	"t"
Sixth grade GLAT 1992 scores of Normally promoted students	46	70.80	21.30	3.14	22.55
Sixth grade GLAT 1993 scores of Retained students	14	8.63	10.63	2.84	3.04

Significant  $p < 0.05$

The difference between the means was 62.17 in favor of the normally promoted mean. The standard error of difference of the normally promoted students is 3.14 yielding a 't' ratio of 22.55 that was statistically significant at the .05 level of significance. The standard error of difference of the retained promoted students is 2.84 yielding a 't' ratio of 3.04 that was statistically significant at the .05 level of significance.

The remaining ten (10) normally promoted students were classified, as SNA's since their scores were not available. These data showed that normally promoted students performed better on standardized tests than retained students.

The data on students achievement at the secondary school level based on ninth grade BJC scores for students normally promoted and those retained are presented in Table 3.

These data showed that the mean BJC score for students normally promoted was 41.31% and the standard deviation was 20.32. The mean BJC score for students retained was 4.02% and the standard deviation was 9.13.

Table 3

Comparison between normally promoted students and those retained based on BJC 95 & BJC 96 scores at the secondary school level

Item	No.	Mean	S. D.	S. E.	"t"
BJC 1995 scores of normally promoted students	34	41.31	20.32	3.49	11.85
BJC 1996 scores of retained students	8	4.02	9.13	3.23	1.24
Significant $p < 0.05$					



The difference between the means was 37.29 in favor of the normally promoted mean. The standard error of difference for the normally promoted students was 3.49 yielding a 't' ratio of 11.85 that was significant at the .05 level of significance. The standard error of difference for the retained promoted students was 3.23 yielding a 't' ratio of 1.24 that was significant at the .05 level of significance.

The remaining normally promoted students were classified as: Twenty-two (22) SNA's and two (2) scores of zero. The remaining six (6) repeaters were also SNA's.

The data on student achievement at the secondary level based on twelfth grade BGCSE scores for the students normally promoted and those retained are presented in Table 4.

These data showed that the mean BGCSE score for students normally promoted was 33.32% and the standard deviation was 22.50. The mean BGCSE score for the students retained was 8.27% and the standard deviation was 16.49.

Table 4

Comparison between normally promoted students and those retained based on BGCSE 98 & BGCSE 99 scores at the secondary school level

Item	No.	Mean	S. D.	S. E.	"t"
BGCSE 1998 scores of normally promoted students	32	33.32	22.50	3.98	8.38
BGCSE 1999 scores of retained students	4	8.27	16.49	8.24	1.00
Significant $p < 0.05$					

The difference between the means was 25.05 in favor of the normally promoted

mean. The standard error of difference for the normally promoted students was 3.98 yielding a 't' ratio of 8.38 that was significant at the .05 level of significance. The standard error of difference for the retained students was 8.24 yielding a 't' ratio of 1.00 that was significant at the .05 level of significance.

Hence, there is a significant difference in the achievement of normally promoted students when compared with those who have been retained resulting in the null hypothesis being rejected. The remaining twenty-four (24) normally promoted students and eight (8) retained students were classified as SNA's.

The second null hypothesis suggests that there is no significant difference in the achievement of students who have been socially promoted as compared with students who have been normally promoted.

The data on students' achievement at the primary school level based on third grade GLAT scores for students normally promoted and those students socially promoted are presented in Table 5. These data showed that the mean GLAT score for students normally promoted was 58.83% and the standard deviation was 15.17. The mean for the students socially promoted was 20.96% and the standard deviation was 10.36.

Table 5

Comparison between normally promoted students and those socially promoted based on GLAT 89 scores at the primary school level

Item	No.	Mean	S. D.	S. E.	"t"
Third grade GLAT 1989 scores of normally promoted students	56	58.83	15.17	2.03	29.02
Third grade GLAT 1989 scores of socially promoted students	89	20.96	10.36	1.10	19.08
Significant $p < 0.05$					

The difference between the means was 37.84 in favor of the normally promoted mean. The standard error of difference of the normally promoted students was 2.03 yielding a 't' ratio of 29.02 that was statistically significant at the .05 level of significance. The standard error of difference of the socially promoted students was 1.10 yielding a 't' ratio of 19.08 that was statistically significant at the .05 level of significance.

The remaining ten (10) socially promoted students were classified as SNA's.

The data on the students' achievement at the primary school level based on sixth grade GLAT scores for students normally promoted and those retained are presented in Table 6.

These data showed that the mean GLAT score for students normally promoted was 70.80% and the standard deviation was 21.30. The mean for the students socially promoted was 24.06 and the standard deviation was 16.99.

Table 6

Comparison between normally promoted students and those socially promoted based on GLAT 92 scores at the primary school level

Item	No.	Mean	S. D.	S. E.	"t"
Sixth grade GLAT 1992 scores of normally promoted students	46	70.80	21.30	3.14	22.55
Sixth grade GLAT 1992 scores of socially promoted students	75	24.06	16.99	1.96	12.27
Significant $p < 0.05$					

The difference between the means was 46.74 in favor of the normally promoted mean. The standard error of difference of the normally promoted students is 3.14 yielding a 't' ratio of 22.55 that was statistically significant at the .05 level of significance. The standard error of difference of the socially promoted students is 1.96 yielding a 't' ratio of 12.27 that was statistically significant at the .05 level of significance.

These data showed that normally promoted students performed better on standardized tests than socially promoted students. The remaining ten (10) normally promoted students and twenty-four (24) socially promoted students were classified as SNA's.

The data on students achievement at the secondary school level based on ninth grade BJC scores for students normally promoted and those socially promoted are presented in Table 7.

These data showed that the mean BJC score for students normally promoted was 41.31% and the standard deviation was 20.32. The mean BJC score for students socially

promoted was 20.98% and the standard deviation was 17.41.

Table 7

Comparison between normally promoted students and those socially promoted based on BJC 95 scores at the secondary school level

Item	No.	Mean	S. D.	S. E.	"t"
BJC 1995 scores of normally promoted students	34	41.31	20.32	3.49	11.85
BJC 1995 scores of socially promoted students	49	20.98	17.41	2.49	8.44
Significant $p < 0.05$					

The difference between the means was 20.33 in favor of the normally promoted mean. The standard error of difference for the normally promoted students was 3.49 yielding a 't' ratio of 11.85 that was significant at the .05 level of significance. The standard error of difference for the socially promoted students was 2.49 yielding a 't' ratio of 8.44 that was significant at the .05 level of significance.

The remaining twenty-two (22) normally promoted students and fifty (50) socially promoted students were classified as SNA's.

The data on students' achievement at the secondary school level based on twelfth grade BGCSE scores for the students normally promoted and those socially promoted are presented in Table 8.

These data showed that the mean BGCSE score for students normally promoted was 33.32% and the standard deviation was 22.50. The mean BGCSE score for the

students socially promoted was 8.59% and the standard deviation was 15.77.

**Table 8**  
Comparison between normally promoted students and those socially promoted based on BGCSE 98 scores at the secondary school level

Item	No.	Mean	S. D.	S. E.	"t"
BGCSE 1998 scores of normally promoted students	32	33.32	22.50	3.98	8.38
BGCSE 1998 scores of socially promoted students	96	8.59	15.77	1.61	5.33

Significant  $p < 0.05$

The difference between the means was 24.73 in favor of the normally promoted mean. The standard error of difference for the normally promoted students was 3.98 yielding a 't' ratio of 8.38 that was significant at the .05 level of significance. The standard error of difference for the socially promoted students was 1.61 yielding a 't' ratio of 5.33 that was significant at the .05 level of significance.

Hence, there is a significant difference in the achievement of socially promoted students when compared with students who have been normally promoted resulting in the null hypothesis being rejected. The remaining twenty-four (24) normally promoted students and four (4) socially promoted students were classified as SNA's.

The final null hypothesis suggests that there is no significant difference in the achievement of students who have been retained as compared with students who have been socially promoted.

The data on students' achievement at the primary school level based on third

grade GLAT scores for students socially promoted and those students retained are presented in Table 9. These data showed that the mean GLAT score for students socially promoted was 20.96% and the standard deviation was 10.36. The mean for the students retained was 15.70% and the standard deviation was 14.64.

Table 9

Comparison between socially promoted students and those retained based on GLAT 89 & GLAT 90 scores at the primary school level

Item	No.	Mean	S. D.	S. E.	"t"
Third grade GLAT 1989 scores of Socially promoted students	89	20.96	10.36	1.10	19.08
Third grade GLAT 1990 scores of retained students	13	15.70	14.64	4.06	3.87
Significant $p < 0.05$					

The difference between the means was 5.25 in favor of the socially promoted mean. The standard error of difference of the socially promoted students was 1.10 yielding a 't' ratio of 19.08 that was statistically significant at the .05 level of significance. The standard error of difference of the retained students was 4.06 yielding a 't' ratio of 3.87 that was statistically significant at the .05 level of significance. The remaining ten (10) socially promoted students were classified as SNA's.

The data on students' achievement at the primary school level based on sixth grade GLAT scores for students socially promoted and those retained are presented in Table 10.

These data showed that the mean GLAT score for students socially promoted was 24.06% and the standard deviation was 16.99. The mean for the students retained was 8.63 and the standard deviation was 10.63.

Table 10

Comparison between socially promoted students and those retained based on GLAT 92 & GLAT 93 scores at the primary school level

Item	No.	Mean	S. D.	S. E.	"t"
Sixth grade GLAT 1992 scores of socially promoted students	75	24.06	16.99	1.96	12.27
Sixth grade GLAT 1993 scores of retained students	14	8.63	10.63	2.84	3.04
Significant $p < 0.05$					

The difference between the means was 15.43 in favor of the socially promoted mean. The standard error of difference of the socially promoted students is 1.96 yielding a 't' ratio of 12.27 that was statistically significant at the .05 level of significance. The standard error of difference of the retained students is 2.84 yielding a 't' ratio of 3.04 that was statistically significant at the .05 level of significance.

These data showed that socially promoted students performed better on standardized tests than retained students even though both groups had considerably below average scores. The remaining twenty-four (24) socially promoted students were classified as SNA's.



The data on student achievement at the secondary school level based on ninth grade BJC scores for students socially promoted and those retained are presented in Table 11.

These data showed that the mean BJC score for students socially promoted was 20.98% and the standard deviation was 17.41. The mean BJC score for students retained was 4.02% and the standard deviation was 9.13.

Table 11

Comparison between socially promoted students and those retained based on BJC 95 & BJC 96 scores at the secondary school level

Item	No.	Mean	S. D.	S. E.	"t"
BJC 1995 scores of socially promoted students	49	20.98	17.41	2.49	8.42
BJC 1996 scores of retained students	8	4.02	9.13	3.23	1.23
Significant $p < 0.05$					

The difference between the means was 16.96 in favor of the socially promoted mean. The standard error of difference for the socially promoted students was 2.49 yielding a 't' ratio of 8.42 that was significant at the .05 level of significance. The standard error of difference for the retained students was 3.23 yielding a 't' ratio of 1.23 that was significant at the .05 level of significance.

The remaining fifty (50) socially promoted students and six (6) retained students were classified as SNA's.

The data on student achievement at the secondary level based on twelfth grade BGCSE scores for the students socially promoted and those retained are presented in Table 12.

These data showed that the mean BGCSE score for students socially promoted was 8.59% and the standard deviation was 15.77. The mean BGCSE score for the students retained was 8.27% and the standard deviation was 16.49.

Table 12

Comparison between socially promoted students and those retained based on BGCSE 98 & BGCSE 99 scores at the secondary school level

Item	No.	Mean	S. D.	S. E.	"t"
BGCSE 1998 scores of socially promoted students	96	8.59	15.77	1.61	5.33
BGCSE 1999 scores of retained students	4	8.27	16.49	8.24	1.00
Significant $p < 0.05$					

The difference between the means was 0.32 in favor of the socially promoted mean. The standard error of difference for the socially promoted students was 1.61 yielding a 't' ratio of 5.33 that was significant at the .05 level of significance. The standard error of difference for the retained students was 8.24 yielding a 't' ratio of 1.00 that was significant at the .05 level of significance.

The remaining four (4) socially promoted students and eight (8) retained students were classified as SNA's. When asked the possible reason for so many SNA, Mrs. Evelyn Sawyer, 15 year Senior Examination Officer replied that many students who are

poor performers make themselves scarce during testing times to avoid failure or embarrassment.

These findings do not support the interview data and the prior literature. In fact there is a significant difference in the achievement of students socially promoted in comparison to those retained resulting in the null hypothesis being rejected.

By examination of the interview data, students who have school as well as parental support perform better in school. The data also suggests that those students who attend school regularly have a higher level of achievement than students who miss a lot of schooling.

Overall, the data does not support the findings of the literature, which concludes that there is a significant difference in performance to determine that students who are retained have a higher level of achievement.

The data used for this section of the study were inclusive of Standardized Test Scores for GLAT, BJC, and BGCSE to see if performance varied greatly over their primary and secondary school years (see Appendix 3).

Similarly, the interviews were used to examine the perception of school administrators as it relates to the effects of retention and social promotion on school achievement.

### Summary

The study found that retention and social promotion have profound negative effects on school achievement. Both groups of students retained and socially promoted scored very much below the students normally promoted when GLAT, BJC and BGCSE scores were compared; resulting in all three (3) null hypotheses measuring achievement being rejected.

## CHAPTER 6

### FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study was to determine the effects of retention and social promotion on school achievement, as measured by enrollment files; standardized test scores and an analysis of students' performance based on standardized test scores. A sample of one hundred and eighty-two (182) students were obtained from Stephen Dillet Primary School to be tracked through out High School. However, only one hundred and sixty-nine students were successfully tracked.

#### Findings

The direct findings indicate that there is a significant difference in the achievement of students normally promoted when compared with those socially promoted and retained. The students socially promoted and retained both scored very much below the normally promoted students but still showed a difference in achievement; resulting in all three hypotheses being rejected.

Basically, all variances depended on the involvement of the schools and parents in students' education, the level of students' attendance to school and the level of interest in education.

### Conclusions

Based on the findings, the study concludes that retention was not beneficial to students' achievement. These students usually feel like failures and a disappointment to themselves and their parents. They feel stagnated when they are separated from their peers not understanding why their friends are advancing to the next level and they have to repeat the same level. These students do not usually catch up and become troublemakers or drop out of school.

The students socially promoted are usually unaware of how far behind or not prepared they may be when advanced to the next level. They are so happy to be moving along the course to completion of schooling that little else matters. They are clueless as to how this lack of preparation for the work force or even college will profoundly impact their future. They are some of the students who turn to criminal activities or drugs as opposed to going on to college or directly to a good, honest job as normally promoted students do. Others may seek help to better themselves and succeed but for the most part, socially promoted students remain below average.

The study directly showed that a consistency of below average scores could be directly related to a lack of parental involvement, high absenteeism, and a lack of interest in education. Those students who did not receive support from parents in any or little school activities perceived education to be non-important and therefore, showed little or no interest in learning or attending school.

### Implications

In this study, the paradigm that exists relates to the fact that social promotion and retention can have profound negative and positive effects on school achievement.

All administrators agreed that retention can usually improve the performance of students but they (the students) have to see, or at least understand how it will merit them, parents have to be supportive of the schools' decision to retain, and retention must be initiated early enough to benefit below average students. This is a direct relationship to the findings in other research and the results of the researcher constructed interview as presented throughout the literature.

The researcher constructed interview used to ascertain the effects of retention on school achievement, indicates that administrators do feel that students' level of performance can be positively as well as negatively effected by retention, depending on the level at which retention is initiated.

To add, many believe that the students do not always have a problem grasping the concepts at that grade level. Hence, the teacher may very well have difficulty delivering the information effectively to the students. Teachers may not be skilled in all areas and may need to be put on a Professional Development Plan (PDP) or enrolled in Staff Development courses.

The researcher-constructed interview also revealed that social promotion is not always effective due to the fact that students are promoted based on age and not ability. Nevertheless, social promotion can prove beneficial to late bloomers who can benefit from bright students, and improve the performance of slow learners who will not benefit

from retention. These slow learners however, do not usually catch up (Green, 1999).

The overall results from the researcher-constructed interview reveal that retention is more effective when initiated between grades 1- 4, and the school has the support of the parents. Social promotion can have a more positive effect on student performance once it is based on the ability of the students and not need of space, student age and cost.

The interviews also revealed that students' attainment is negatively affected by retention especially if there is no significant improvement in achievement. These are usually the students who drop out of school at the high school level, seeing no positive way that education will impact their present or future life.

The study implies that when school and home work together, the education process will be most effective. Because of these inferences, the findings should be used to put a precise policy in place as it relates to student promotion and retention so that teachers, administrators and parents can make better decisions for all students. If improved academic achievement is the current trend, and then parental involvement needs to be heightened to achieve success.

With current trends increasing, the need for support from the home is necessary or this problem will become more of a factor. The study also implies that students need to be taught the value of a good, sound education, have more respect for teachers and administrators, and a brighter out-look for their future beyond drugs, violence and crime.



### Recommendations

After, lengthy interviews with principals and school administrators, they all agreed that changes have to be made in the Bahamian Educational System in order to achieve optimal success. Hence, the writer recommends that the following changes be made:

1. A clear-cut policy concerning normal promotion, social promotion and retention be established so that teachers and administrators can make better decisions for all students.
2. Students who have worked hard all year to gain promotion should not be bunched together with students who did not make the grade and hence are subject to social promotion. This type of classification is unfair to the students who through hard work and perseverance deserve advancement.
3. Remediation programs and/or specialists need to be put in place to assist students who have special needs but are not retarded nor mentally challenged.
4. Psychological Services needs to work more closely with the schools (especially primary schools) and respond promptly with results when students are evaluated and/or tested.
5. Laws specifying the legal age of school attendance need to be clearly defined so those parents who do not send their children to school can be prosecuted.
6. More attendance officers need to be hired to help alleviate the problem of skipping school and poor school attendance.
7. More programs need to be developed to help young mothers to see and appreciate the

importance of a good, sound education. They also need to be trained on how to be good parents.

8. The Ministry of Education needs to decrease class size, improve compensation packages for teachers, make sure that there are sufficient substitute teachers available to replace sick and/or absent teachers, and regulate the school supply system.
9. Educators need to be given a voice in educational matters and not individuals that have no idea of how to run a school or what is necessary for learning to take place.
10. Performance Development Plans (PDP's) need to be mandatory for those teachers who are evaluated poorly or show weaknesses in certain areas of the curriculum. Hence, this will ensure that all teaching and administrative promotions and appointments are earned and well deserved and not the result of political affiliations.

### Summary

This study found contrary conclusions to the research literature presented earlier. In fact, it showed that both groups of students retained and socially promoted scored substantially lower than the students normally promoted when GLAT, BJC, and BGCSE test results were compared. Thus, showing a significant difference in the performance of these groups of students. This is not an encouraging trend for public school education.

The only indicators that can cause a significant change in student achievement are directly related to parental involvement, level of students' absenteeism, and level of students' interest in education. Since the findings relate directly to student performance level, increased parental support is necessary to improve the levels of academic success.

## **APPENDIX**

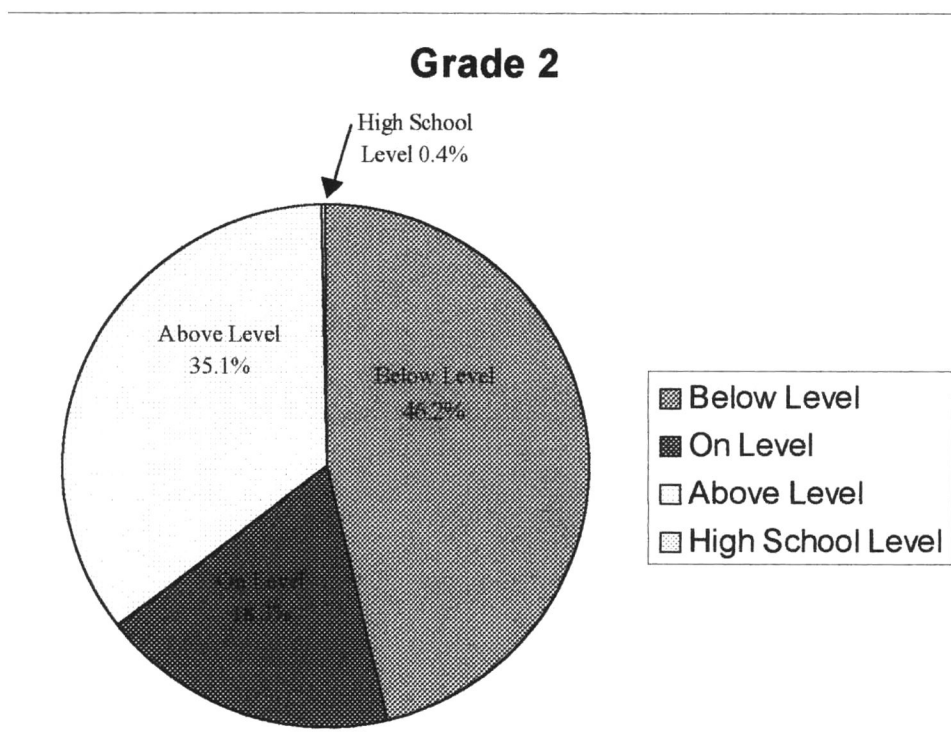
## APPENDICES

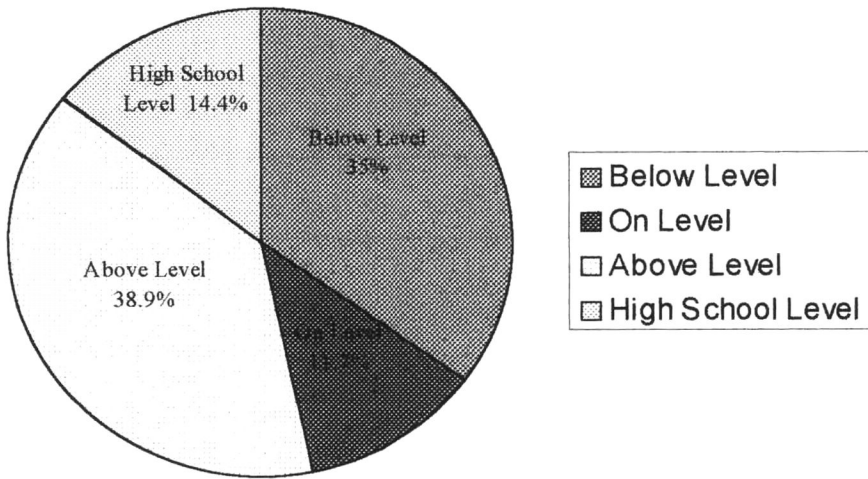
Samantha V. Evans

May 2000

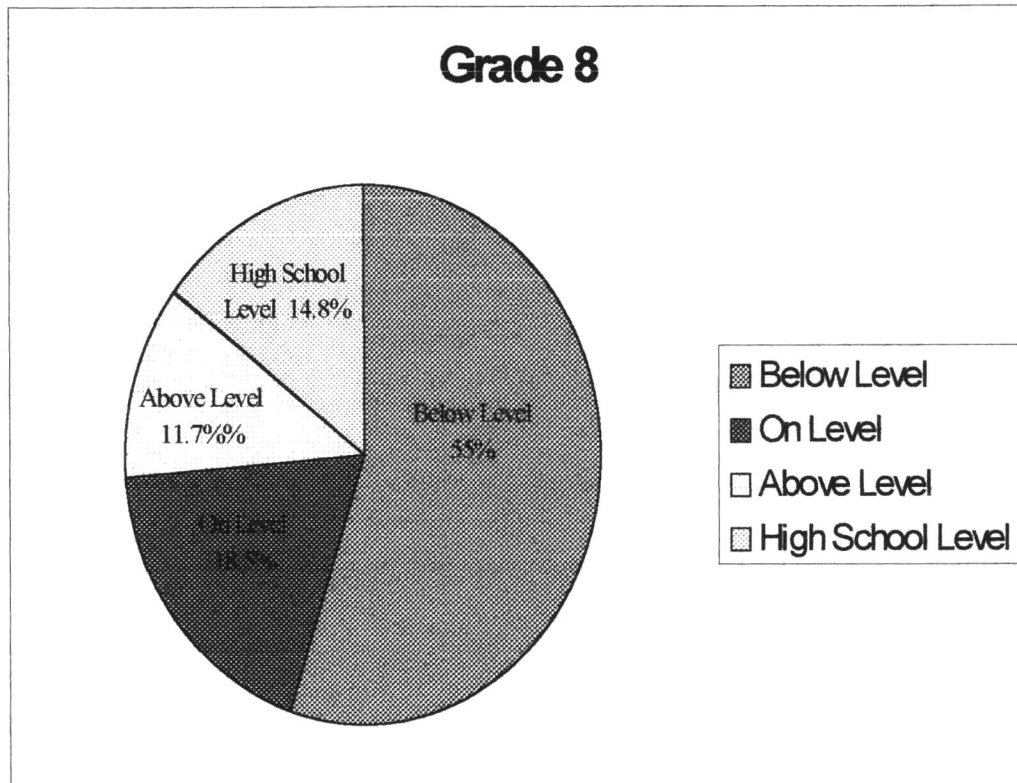
PROPOSED TITLE:	The Effects of Retention and Social Promotion on School Achievement.
PROBLEM:	Statistics regarding academic achievement indicate that scores are lower than they were a decade ago. Social promotion and student retention has been continually questioned regarding whether it has any impact on academic results. The purpose of this study will be to investigate the effects of retention and social promotion on school achievement.
PROCEDURE:	The study will compare the achievement of socially promoted students with those retained to see if retention improves performance. The study will be limited to Ministry officials and school administrators' accurate record keeping, filing of test scores and enrollment data. The information gathered will cover a twelve- (12) year school cohort. It will be descriptive in nature, using existing data to do content analysis.
RESEARCH:	Statistical data from standardized test scores: GLAT, BJC and BGCSE; Primary research using the Nassau Guardian and other research papers and minutes.

**Ministry of Education and Training**  
**The National Analysis of The Slossan's Reading Test**  
**Administered April-June, 1994**

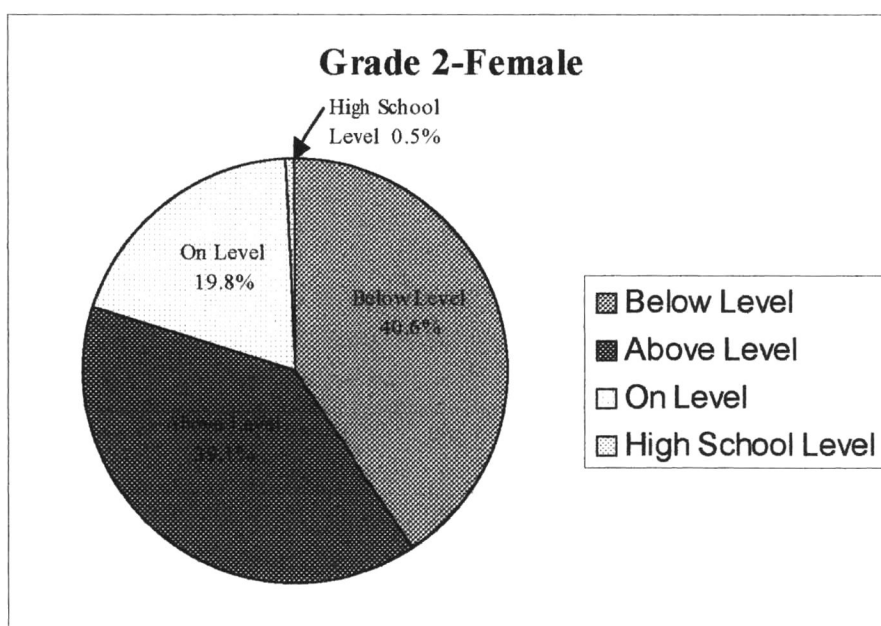
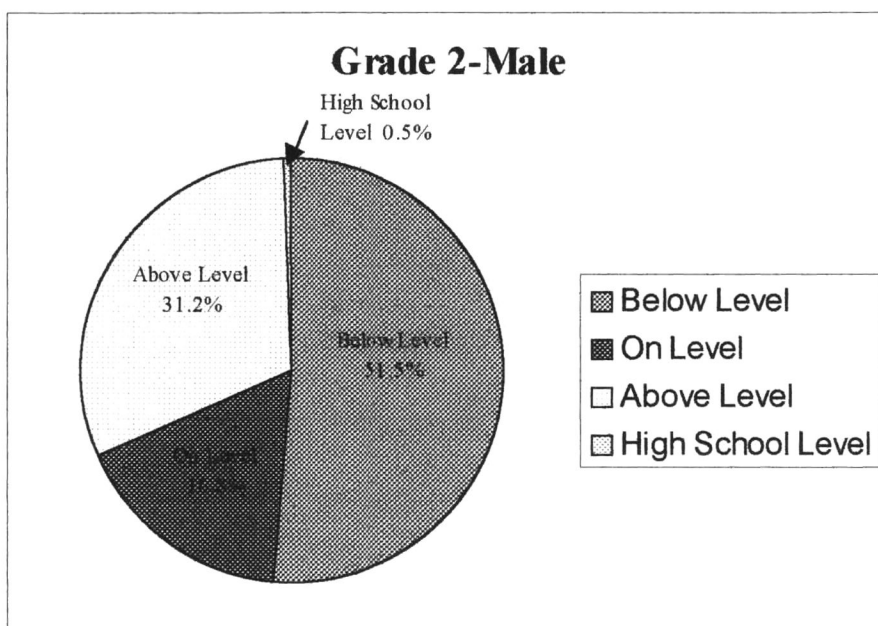


**Appendix Continued****Grade 6**

## APPENDIX Continued



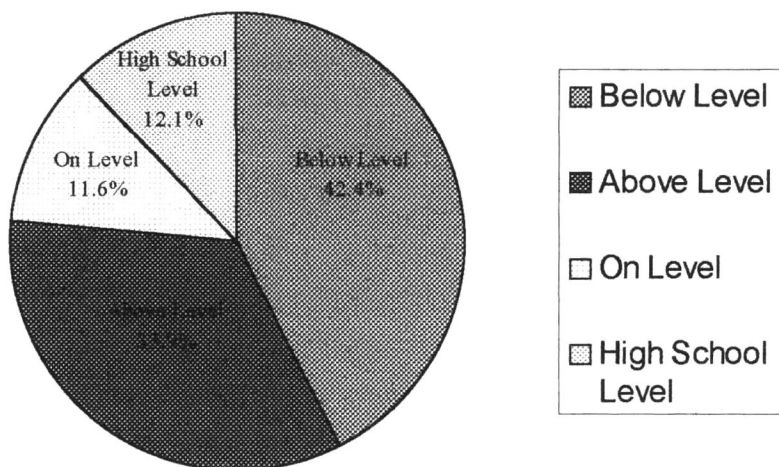
## Appendix Continued

**A Comparative Analysis: Male vs. Female By Grade**

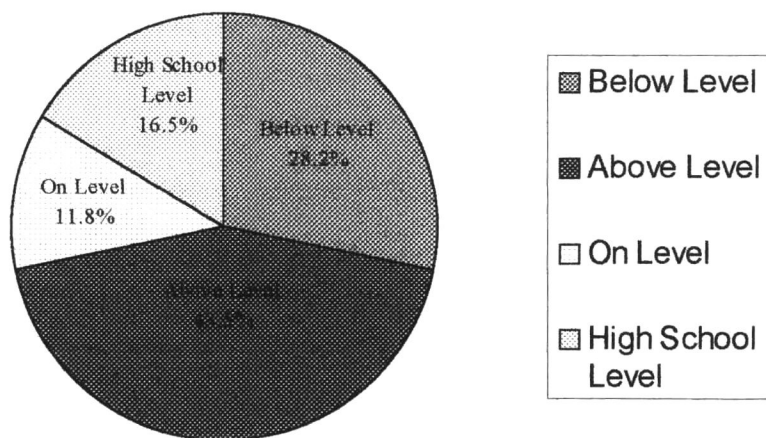


## APPENDIX Continued

## Grade 6-Male

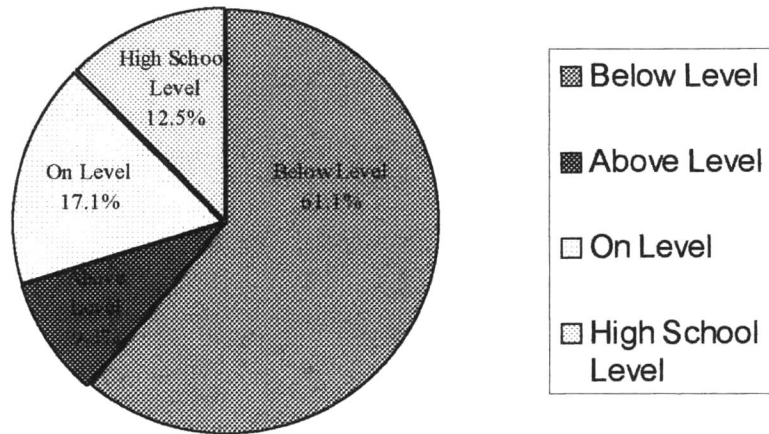


## Grade 6-Female

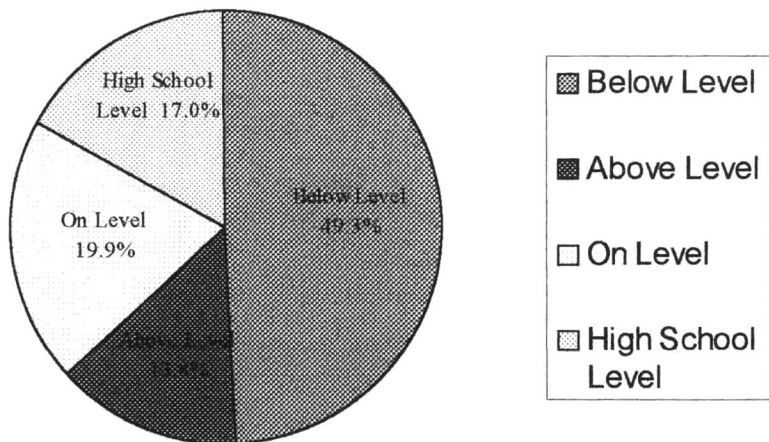


## APPENDIX Continued

## Grade 8-Male



## Grade 8-Female



## APPENDIX Continued

### EXPLANATION / IDENTIFICATION OF COLUMNS

No	A sequential number for each student so they may be dealt with in an anonymous manner (1 through 182 arranged in random order).
S	Sex of each student ( M = male, and F = female).
GLAT - 89	Grade Level Assessment Test for Spring 1989.
GLAT - 92	Grade Level Assessment Test for Spring 1992.
BJC - 95	Bahamas Junior Certificate for Spring 1995.
BGCSE -98	Bahamas General Certificate of Secondary Education Spring 1998.

**KEY**            A test score of “SNA” denotes that this score was unavailable.  
                       A test score of “DNA” denotes that this student did not attempt the test.

R        Retention  
P        Promotion

GLAT scores and BJC scores are mean scores of student achievement (NCE). NCE scores make it possible to compare students' performance on tests that have different numbers of items and scoring procedures.

BGCSE letter scores were converted to percentile ranks using a 9 point scale with 1 being the lowest and 9 being the highest possible (1-3: below average; 4-6: average; and 7-9: above average).

## APPENDIX Continued

<u>NO.</u>	<u>SEX</u>	<u>GLAT-89</u>	<u>GLAT-92</u>	<u>BJC-95</u>	<u>BGCSE-98</u>
1	F	12.3	88.7	25	SNA
2	F	85.7	96.9	76	57
3	M	68.4	74.6	46	00
4	F	80.7	82.7	SNA	SNA
5	F	SNA	SNA	SNA	SNA
6	F	69.6	85.7	50	38
7	F	SNA	SNA	SNA	SNA
8	M	57.5	75.6	SNA	SNA
9	F	89.8	95.8	73	59
10	F	41.5	46.5	54	45
11	F	72.6	86.7	73	71
12	F	81.7	90.8	00	47
13	M	73.6	84.7	34	00
14	M	54.5	53.5	20	00
15	F	83.7	93.8	71	00
16	M	75.6	SNA	SNA	SNA
17	F	71.6	DNA	24	50
18	F	45.5	56.5	SNA	SNA
19	F	67.6	74.6	33	34
20	M	41.5	40.5	20	23

**APPENDIX Continued**

21	M	33.4	40.5	40	31
22	M	62.6	62.6	43	40
23	F	73.6	72.6	SNA	SNA
24	M	SNA	SNA	00	00
25	F	62.6	74.6	SNA	SNA
26	F	50.5	66.6	SNA	SNA
27	M	50.5	79.7	SNA	57
28	M	54.5	SNA	SNA	SNA
29	M	47.5	72.6	00	55
30	F	73.6	90.8	73.5	67
31	F	18.3	SNA	SNA	SNA
32	M	52.5	96.9	55	43
33	F	45.5	SNA	SNA	SNA
34	M	47.5	69.6	36	SNA
35	F	DNA	58.5	54	61
36	F	56.5	85.7	43	44
37	F	44.5	SNA	48	38
38	F	42.5	SNA	SNA	SNA
39	F	85.7	96.9	SNA	SNA
40	F	50.5	75.6	SNA	SNA
41	M	59.5	72.6	SNA	SNA

**APPENDIX Continued**

42	F	DNA	SNA	SNA	SNA
43	F	67.6	SNA	SNA	SNA
44	M	69.6	SNA	SNA	SNA
45	M	37.4	15.3	26	10
46	F	38.4	53.5	SNA	SNA
47	M	50.5	34.4	34	00
48	F	69.6	75.6	SNA	SNA
49	F	23.4	12.3	00	00
50	M	18.3	74.6	50	39
51	F	48.5	72.6	46	29
52	M	30.4	36.4	37	39
53	M	34.4	27.4	SNA	SNA
54	F	SNA	SNA	29	7
55	M	88.7	98.9	54	45
56	M	40.5	31.4	21	19
57	F	35.4	SNA	SNA	SNA
58	F	33.4	51.5	SNA	5
59	F	61.6	83.7	SNA	SNA
60	M	15.3	SNA	SNA	SNA
61	F	25.4	SNA	SNA	SNA

**APPENDIX Continued**

62	F	SNA	SNA	10	6
63	F	51.5	SNA	27	11
64	F	35.4	58.5	SNA	SNA
65	M	35.4	24.4	20	9
66	F	49.5	50.5	17	29
67	M	21.3	11.3	00	00
68	M	23.4	SNA	46	00
69	M	SNA	SNA	SNA	SNA
70	F	SNA	48.5	SNA	SNA
71	M	17.3	11.3	SNA	SNA
72	M	59.5	74.6	SNA	SNA
73	M	25.4	37.4	17	21
74	M	28.4	18.3	00	SNA
75	F	12.3	SNA	9	SNA
76	M	18.3	14.3	SNA	SNA
77	F	19.3	14.3	SNA	SNA
78	M	29.4	SNA	26	36
79	F	22.3	50.5	SNA	4
80	F	31.4	SNA	SNA	SNA
81	M	46.5	61.6	60	36
82	M	SNA	SNA	SNA	SNA

**APPENDIX Continued**

83	M	51.5	67.6	40	00
84	F	60.6	85.7	43	52
85	F	16.3	SNA	11	17
86	M	20.3	18.3	SNA	SNA
87	M	26.4	15.3	SNA	SNA
88	M	56.5	82.7	69	63
89	M	17.3	38.4	33	26
90	M	45.5	SNA	SNA	SNA
91	M	21.3	SNA	00	00
92	F	18.3	37.4	SNA	SNA
93	M	56.5	SNA	SNA	SNA
94	F	29.4	39.4	37	26
95	F	34.4	51.5	57	45
96	M	35.4	19.3	26	SNA
97	F	SNA	SNA	14	14
98	M	31.4	12.3	SNA	SNA
99	M	12.3	SNA	00	00
100	F	17.3	30.4	28.6	00
101	F	17.3	30.4	28.6	00
102	M	41.5	25.4	SNA	SNA
103	F	29.4	16.3	23.8	39



**APPENDIX Continued**

104	F	24.4	22.3	23	5
105	M	SNA	SNA	SNA	SNA
106	M	29.4	15.3	SNA	SNA
107	M	53.5	SNA	66	55
108	M	27.4	17.3	SNA	7
109	M	14.8	DNA	SNA	SNA
110	M	47.5	43.5	23	29
112	F	30.4	64.6	33	26
113	M	51.5	67.6	63	SNA
114	M	13.3	9.2	SNA	SNA
115	F	DNA	12.3	SNA	SNA
116	F	DNA	48.5	38	51
117	F	37.4	SNA	SNA	SNA
118	F	30.4	13.3	14	SNA
119	F	DNA	15.3	SNA	00
120	F	22.3	SNA	26	18
121	M	21.3	14.3	00	00
122	F	12.3	12.3	SNA	SNA
123	F	13.3	12.3	6	SNA
124	F	24.4	42.5	SNA	37
125	F	13.3	17.3	00	4

**APPENDIX Continued**

126	M	15.3	SNA	SNA	SNA
127	F	25.4	SNA	3	SNA
128	M	20.3	20.3	SNA	SNA
129	M	DNA	24.4	54	66
130	F	SNA	SNA	SNA	SNA
131	F	SNA	52.5	40	23
132	F	SNA	SNA	SNA	SNA
133	M	SNA	SNA	29	31
134	M	SNA	SNA	SNA	SNA
135	M	DNA	22.3	26	SNA
136	F	24.4	DNA	SNA	SNA
137	F	46.5	56.5	40	40
140	M	25.4	DNA	SNA	SNA
141	F	12.3	DNA	SNA	7
142	M	18.3	7.2	SNA	SNA
144	M	29.4	24.4	SNA	SNA
145	M	SNA	24.4	00	SNA
146	F	SNA	26.4	SNA	SNA
147	F	DNA	35.4	SNA	SNA
148	M	15.3	9.2	9	18
149	F	35.4	SNA	18	50.5

**APPENDIX Continued**

150	F	21.3	12.3	SNA	SNA
151	M	18.3	16.3	00	SNA
153	M	22.3	10.2	SNA	SNA
154	F	16.3	SNA	SNA	SNA
155	M	SNA	SNA	SNA	SNA
156	M	23.4	15.3	SNA	SNA
157	F	38.4	26.4	40	00
158	M	20.3	19.3	SNA	00
159	M	9.2	DNA	SNA	SNA
160	M	16.3	SNA	SNA	SNA
161	M	DNA	19.3	SNA	00
163	F	14.3	33.4	SNA	SNA
165	M	8.2	9.2	SNA	SNA
166	F	27.4	18.3	SNA	00
168	F	23.4	33.4	SNA	5
170	M	11.3	17.3	00	14
174	F	DNA	12.3	SNA	00
176	M	21.3	25.4	SNA	SNA
177	F	DNA	DNA	SNA	SNA
178	M	12.3	9.2	SNA	SNA
180	M	DNA	6.2	SNA	SNA

**APPENDIX Continued**

181	F	SNA	SNA	SNA	SNA
182	F	SNA	SNA	7	SNA

## APPENDIX Continued

### EXPLANATION/IDENTIFICATION OF COLUMNS FOR REPEATERS

No	A sequential number for each student that repeated a grade in the order they appeared on the total list of students (1 through 182).
S	Sex of each student (M= male, and F= female).
GLAT - 90	Grade Level Assessment Test for Spring 1990.
GLAT - 93	Grade Level Assessment Test for Spring 1993.
BJC - 96	Bahamas Junior Certificate for June 1996.
BGCSE - 99	Bahamas General Certificate of Secondary Education for June 1999.

### **KEY**

A test score of "SNA" denotes that this score was unavailable.  
 A test score of "DNA" denotes that this student did not attempt the test.  
 A test score of "00" denotes that this score was unavailable.  
 A mark of "ABS" denotes that the student was absent for the test.

## APPENDIX Continued

<u>NO</u>	<u>SEX</u>	<u>GLAT-90</u>	<u>GLAT-93</u>	<u>BJC-96</u>	<u>BGCSE-99</u>
111	M	20.3	8.3	SNA	SNA
138	M	DNA	DNA	00	SNA
139	F	9.2	1.1	00	SNA
143	F	00	16.3	00	SNA
152	F	16.3	5.2	00	00
162	M	11.3	4.2	SNA	ABS
164	M	*31.4	^12.3	00	SNA
167	M	27.4	1.1	SNA	SNA
169	F	47.5	36.4	26	ABS
171	M	15.3	DNA	SNA	SNA
172	F	DNA	6.2	00	SNA
173	F	24.4	4.2	6	33
175	M	32.4	24.4	SNA	SNA
179	F	DNA	1.1	SNA	SNA

\* GLAT taken in Spring 1989.

^ GLAT taken in Spring 1992.

## **APPENDIX Continued**

### **INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

1. What is your view of student retention?
2. What is your view of social promotion?
- 3(a). As a principal/administrator, do you believe that there is any guarantee that a child will learn if he repeats the same grade? (Give reasons)
- (b). If this same child is socially promoted and continues to fail, are his self-esteem and self- confidence any higher? (Give reasons)
4. Are there any studies that have been conducted by the Ministry of Education that can show positive or negative effect of retention or promotion on students?
5. Do you believe that the Ministry of Education should ban social promotion? Why or Why not?
6. What steps are being taken by your school or institution to ensure that students are properly prepared for advancement next school year? (i.e. after-school tutoring, enrichment exercises).
7. What factors do you attribute to students being below average or repeaters of the same grade?
8. Are more males or females repeaters? (Reasons)
9. In your professional opinion, what effect does social promotion, cultural background, and economic status have on student achievement or lack there of?
10. What is the Ministry of Education's policy on retention and social promotion?
11. What are the reasons for principals, teachers and other Ministry officials for deciding to hold back a child in elementary schools in the Bahamas?
12. What effect does the migration of Haitians (or migration in general) have on student retention?
13. Do you see retention of students becoming an even bigger problem in the future?
14. What can be done now to prevent this problem in the future?
15. Any final remarks.

**APPENDIX Continued****INTERVIEWEES**  
**September 1998-June 1999 School Year**

Mrs. Barbara Albury-Principal  
Claridge Primary School

Mr. David Dean-Principal/Teacher  
Adelaide Primary School

Mrs. Shirley Green-Principal  
Stephen Dillet Primary School

Mrs. Mildred Turner-Principal  
Uriah McPhee Primary School

Mr. Earl Smith-Principal  
Yellow Elder Primary School

Mrs. Clover Pratt-Vice Principal  
Centerville Primary School

Mrs. Linda Moultrie-Missick-Senior Mistress  
Centerville Primary School

Mrs. Joanna Redhead-Primary Mathematics Officer  
Learning Resources Unit

Mrs. Eugenie Thurston-Vice Principal  
Donald Davis Junior High School

Mrs. Joan Pinto-Counselor  
A.F.Adderley Junior High School

Mrs. Emeline Lockhart-Senior Mistress  
Government High School

Mrs. Evelyn Sawyer-Senior Education Officer  
The Testing and Evaluation Unit  
Ministry of Education



**APPENDIX Continued****INTERVIEWEES CONTINUED**  
**September 1998-June 1999 School Year**

Mrs. Edith Roach-Superintendent  
North Eastern District  
Ministry of Education

Dr. Ezekial Stubbs-Planning Unit  
Ministry of Education

**APPENDIX Continued**  
**SECONDARY EDUCATION**

**Junior High Schools**

A.F.Adderley

C.C.Sweeting

C.H.Reeves

D.W.Davis

H.O.Nash

S.C.McPherson

**Senior High Schools**

C.C. Sweeting

C.I.Gibson

C.R.Walker

Government High School

L.W. Young

R.M.Bailey

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